

War stories

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Summary: The daughter of a veteran probes her parents on their experiences in the great war. Think of this as a pilot episode for a story I've been working on for a while. Reviews and criticism would be very appreciated.

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16/04/2570 - Menai -4:03pm Local time. 23:03 EST

Working indoors when the sun is blazing and the sky is clear can be highly demoralizing. That's why Joan Fawkes opted to do her work in the yard of the garage rather than in the stiflingly humid building. Rolling the car out of the garage had been hard work but worth it in order to enjoy the warmth of Menai's sun at the start of the planets long hot summer. She checked her watch, another few minute and she was free to go. Her profession was not that of an ordinary mechanic, rather she was employed by a small company that specialized in modifying cars and restoring antique automobile's, some of which were centuries old and nearly priceless. She took great pride and pleasure from her occupation and considered herself more of an artist than a mechanic.

With a grunt of exertion she pulled the car on its cart back into workhouse, then pulled the shutters closed behind her. As she passed the main office on her way out she called out to her co-worker Matthias in her thick scouse accent "Done here now! See you tomorrow!" Matthias stuck his head out the doorway and replied "Leaving already? Figures, see you on Monday you lazy bitch!" Joan's response was a grin and a raised middle finger which Matthias reciprocated.

Joan next task before heading home was to pick up the oldest of her kids, Vivian, from football practice. She got into her car and eased it out into the road then accelerated off with the window down to give herself a breeze to go with the heat of the afternoon. She switched on the radio on the dashboard and adjusted the set until she

found a channel playing some flip music and spent the next twenty minutes savoring the journey, rocking her head to the beat of the air guitars.

Vivian was already waiting outside with a gang of her friends when Joan pulled up outside the school. She waved goodbye to them and jogged up to her mother's car and sat down in the passenger seat. Still clad in her sports gear with mud streaked all over her, oblivious to her mother's disapproving gaze as she got mud all over the chair. She shared her mother's dark brown eyes but had inherited her father's blonde hair which she wore short and unkempt. On both cheeks she had a sprinkle of freckles connected by freckles across her nose. "Hey" she said "Turn that old junk down would you, its hurting my ears." Joan's jaw dropped in mock horror "Oi! this is a classic, its part of your heritage!" Vivian rolled her eyes but said nonetheless "Thanks for the lift." "No problem." Replied Joan. "Hang on. What's that?" she motioned to a small trickle of blood on the corner of Vivian's bottom lip, Vivian hastily wiped it away with her sleeve "Its nothing, I got kicked during the game is all." Joan was suspicious "I better not find out that you've been in another fight or you'll get a bloody smack." Vivian raised her hands defensively "I haven't alright? promise." Joan decided to let the issue slide, truth was she had been quietly proud of her daughter for knocking a tooth out of the boy who bullied Vivian's younger brother although she had been careful not to show this in front of her or the head teacher.

Vivian piped up "Hey listen the teacher set is some homework for history, all of us whose parents fought in the war have to write up an essay on what they did. So is it okay if I do an interview with you and Dad?" Joan's eyes were still on the road, but she could feel Vivian's gaze hovering over her left Bicep, she wore just a white tank top on account of the heat so the tattoo on her arm was exposed. A crimson flaming skull upon a golden background in the shape of an HEV pod, the coat of arms of the Orbital Drop Shock Trooper division, it was given to all new recruits upon entering the ranks of the ODS'T's. It was the mark of an elite warrior and commanded respect both in and out of the armed forces. Many youngsters had parents who had served in the Great War but a veteran ODS'T was in an entirely different league.

This request came as a surprise and made Joan uneasy, the horrors of the war was something Joan and her husband tried to put behind them, neither of them had ever gone into great detail about what they had been through to their children and they had no intention of doing so in the future. They always did their best to be open and honest to their children, but this was an exception. Certainly the kids knew that Mum and Dad had been helljumpers and had spent many years fighting in the war, there was no keeping that a secret, but a great deal of what happened in their lives between enlisting and demobilization has been kept vague on purpose.

"How much do you need to know?" Joan asked tentatively. Vivian didn't seem to notice Joan's apprehensiveness "Just basic stuff I think, how old you were when you signed up, what battles you fought in, stuff like that." Joan was quiet for a moment as she considered this, she couldn't just let Vivian fail the assignment and facts and figures couldn't hurt. "Fine, When we get home you can ask some questions, but just so you know war isâ€¦" She paused and searched for the best way to phrase it "Sometimes its hard to talk about." Vivian frowned

"I know mum, listen you don't have to do this-" Joan cut her off  
"Don't worry love, I can answer everything you need to know when we get home."

The two of them got home ten minutes later, the Fawkes's lived in a home in one of the several neighborhoods that lay scattered around the area a few miles outside of Menai's largest city of Concord. It was situated away from the noise and busyness of the city but at the same time not in some isolated little village either.

After getting changed and showered they sat down in the living room, Vivian with her data pad at the ready sat in one chair whilst Joan flopped onto the sofa and extended the footrest. "So where do you wanna begin?" Vivian chewed on her bottom lip as she examined the still blank screen on her data pad as she briefly considered the question before answering "Well I suppose I'd need to put in how old you were and what you did before you joined up, you were born in Liverpool on Earth right?" Joan nodded. "And how old were you when you joined up?" Joan's reply surprised Vivian "Sixteen I was when I enlisted." Vivian blinked and frowned "How? That's too young to enlist isn't it?" Joan shook her head "By 2536 the UNSC was losing troops faster than they could be replaced, so they lowered the recruiting age from eighteen to sixteen." Vivian scribbled this down on the data pad as she asked her next question "What year was that in?" "2537, January 2537." Vivian wrote that down too.

End  
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